Central American
NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, URMSTON, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161-747 5924.

Vol.IV, No.66 January 1997

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The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society,** the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription from the Secretary, Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. Subscription is currently £8 in Europe or $20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling of US$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/$54 and a five year subscription of £30/$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining during the course of the year the appropriate part subscriptions should be added - Feb-Apr £6/$15; May-Aug £4/$10; Sep-Nov £2/$5 to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £6/$11 resident in the UK or in Europe, or £8/$15 elsewhere. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining after June 1st, add 50% to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 0161-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

We regret we cannot accept dollar cheques for subscriptions because each cheque costs £5/$8 to negotiate.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/$1.50 each, although Volumes 1 and 2 can be purchased for £10/$20 each, complete, inclusive of postage. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent the the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable. Undated dollar cheques are acceptable for this service.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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Vol.IV, No.66 **January 1997**

EDITORIAL

As I sit here writing this editorial it is on my mind that I should be 42,000 feet above the Atlantic returning from the New York Megashow. I booked with the travel agent, and in order to clear my conscience took my wife to New York for a week in late September. When I got back the travel agent informed me he couldn't get accommodation because of the New York marathon. The stamp fair at Newcastle yesterday was excellent, but I would have preferred to have been in New York again, hopefully meeting some of our members. Perhaps next year!

It was disappointing that so few members turned up for the meeting at Birmingham NEC last Friday as there was some excellent material on show and it is always nice to see old friends again. The next meeting will be Saturday 7 December at the Union Jack Club in Waterloo and so I hope as many of you as possible will support your club. This particular meeting is the annual competition, The Spanish Main Cup, and all members are invited to bring one frame of sixteen sheets.

I have just finished typing the *Chile News* and what is very noticeable about the January issue is that it contains no major articles but it does contain a lot of replies and queries from their members. I do so like to include snippets from members because that is what I feel this journal is really about but these queries appear to have dried up. As I have said many times in the past, unless I hear from you your journal is very likely to turn into the Nicaraguan Newsletter as I fill it with my own myriad of questions and comments. Some of you may prefer that but if we lose members who collect other areas we shall become unviable financially.

Yet again your subscription for the coming year is due and we look forward to receiving it. If you do not renew this will be the last issue you receive. If you have decided not to renew because you are dissatisfied with the journal I would be very pleased to hear your comments. Unless I hear from dissatisfied members I can only assume that everything is OK and nothing will then change.

Finally you will notice that your subscription has not increased for 1997. Both the CA and the Chile journals are now at breakeven point and unless there is an increase for 1998, will go into the red. We are not here to make a profit and indeed I would deplore a large bank balance at the expense of our members but equally we must not make a loss. Please stay with us - we need you.

mpb

If your envelope is marked with a red X cross we look forward to receiving your subscription renewal.

NICARAGUA: POSTAL RATES FROM 1913 - Part 1

by MICHAEL P BIRKS FRPSL

Some years ago, in CANL 26:60 I published a table of postal rates from 1882 to 1913 which was the work of John Whiteside and Dennis Kilner. This pioneering work has stood the test of time and little alteration has been made to it. I reproduce their rates table below, incorporating subsequent changes notified to me through these pages. Areas of doubt, are highlighted.

	Internal				Overseas			
	Postcard	Letter	Reg. Fee	A.R. Fee	Postcard	Letter	Reg. Fee	A.R. Fee
1882 - Dec 1899	2c	5c/15g	10c	5c	3c	10c/15g	10c	5c
1 Jan 1900 to Oct/Nov 1900	2c	5c/15g	10c	5c	6c	10c/15g	10c	5c
Oct/Nov 1900 to Aug/Oct 1905*	2c	5c/15g	10c	10c	5c	15c/15g	10c	10c
Aug/Oct 1905 to Nov 1911	4c	10c/15g			10c	35c/15g	35c	20c
Dec 1911 to mid-1913					15c	50c/20g	50c	25c
from mid-1913 (Cordoba currency)	1c	2c/20g			2c	5c/20g	10c	5c

* these rates continued in use throughout Zelaya until the introduction of the Gold Cordoba

Cécile Gruson, in CANL 41:12 published details of the CA postal & telegraphic convention of 1889, which adds to the above for the Seebeck period at least.

Commercial papers & samples per 250g		5c
Printed matter		free
Registration *(compare with table)*		5c
Declared value, in add. to postage and reg. per 5 pesos		10c
Parcels	less than 1kg	40c ⌈half paid by sender &
	1 - 3kg	60c ⌊half paid by recipient

I had hoped that in the intervening ten years some further work would have been done and published on postal rates. However this has not proved to be the case. During this time I have, myself, attempted to identify subsequent rates with varying degrees of success and if I wait until my researches are complete before I publish, then I shall probably wait forever. Consequently I publish my researches so far in the hope that they will stimulate some form of response.

A.R. fees in the Seebeck period.

There is a conflict of evidence regarding this fee. Some examples demonstrate a fee of 10c (Figs 1 & 2) whilst others demonstrate a fee of 5c (Figs 3 & 4).

Fig 1. 1898 12g: 10c post + 10c reg + 5c AR = 25c

Fig 2. 1893 250g: $1.70 post + 10c reg + 5c AR = $1.85

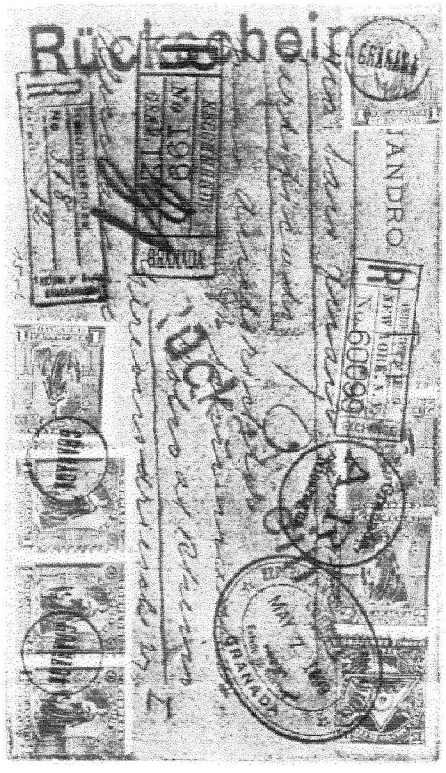


Fig 3. 1899 12g: 10c post + 10c reg + 10c AR = 30c

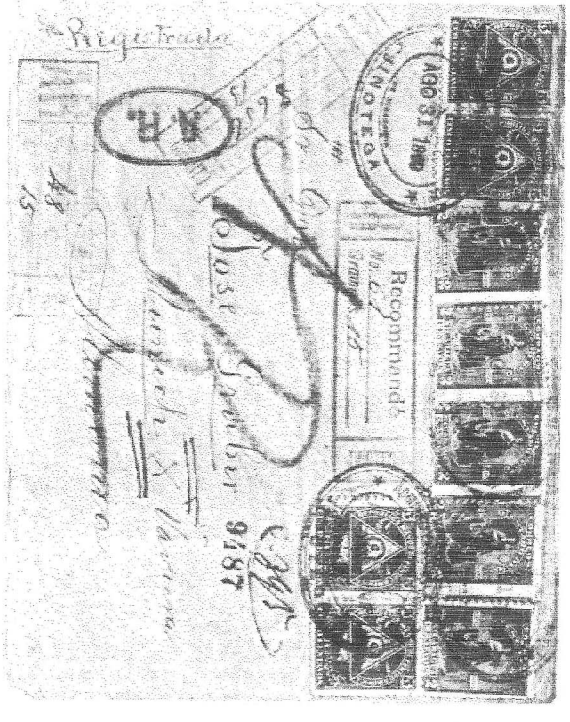


Fig 4. 1899 15g: 10c post + 10c reg + 10c AR = 30c

From the evidence (two covers!) it would appear that the A.R. rate was increased from 5c to 10c in 1899. But was it?

The cover below, figure 5, and dated 13 March 1900, is the only A.R. cover in my collection during this rate period. It demonstrates a 5c A.R. fee and suggests a continuing 5c fee for A.R.. Perhaps the two 1899 covers are wrong. I have no evidence whatsoever to suggest that the same A.R. fee applied to inland mail, but it does seem reasonable.

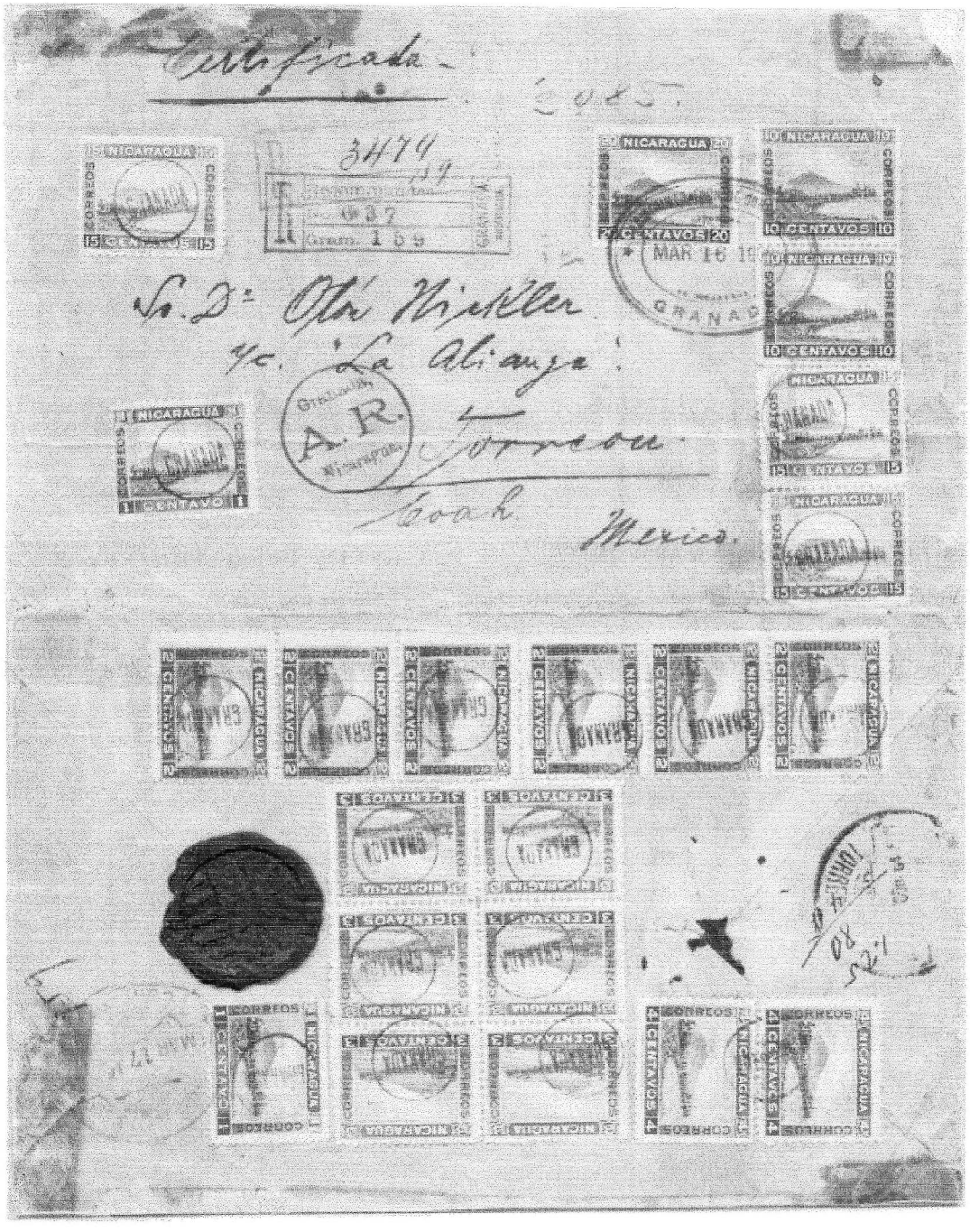


Figure 5. March 1900: 11x10c post + 10c reg + 5c A.R. = $1.25

To be continued.

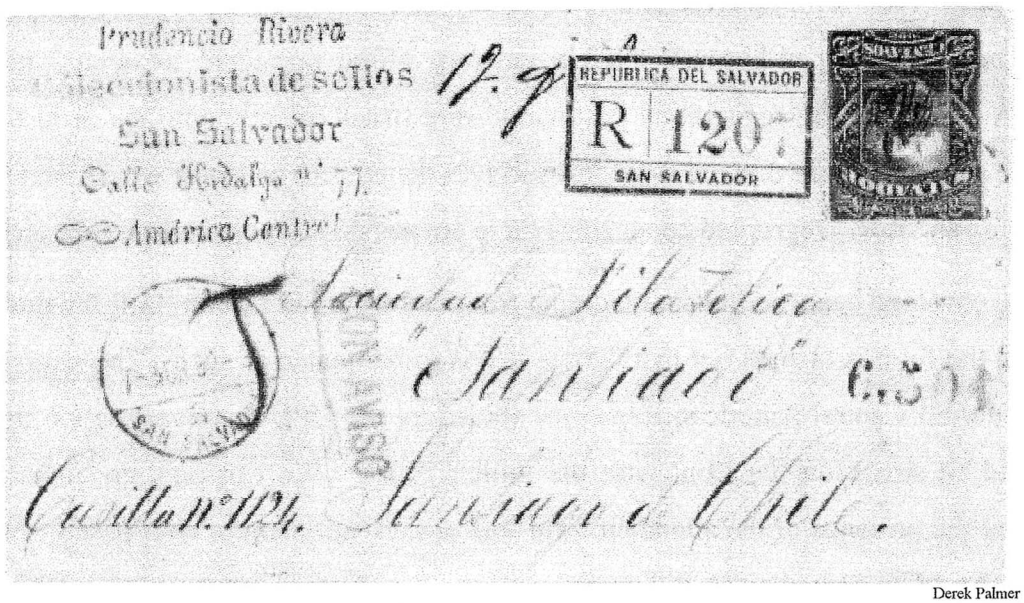
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL "A.R." SYSTEM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Part 2

by Richard H Saundry

At some stage early after 1878 the regulations concerning treatment of "A.R." registered letters were modified such that the "A. R." form could be enclosed with the article to which it related. This meant in practice the form was usually despatched physically stuck to the envelope. Subject to the postal regulations of the country concerned the form could be signed either by the addressee or the Postmaster of the receiving office. The expedient of sticking the "A.R." form directly to the envelope during its outward journey, meant that when the two were parted to return the form, the envelope was often damaged. For this very reason many "A.R." registered envelopes only survive as damaged or battered items, but this is exactly what they should look like. One clue helping distinguish "A.R." covers from ordinary registered covers is that the former often show "tell-tale" signs where the form once was joined, and such adhesive marks should not necessarily be dismissed as the tell-tale signs of how old-time collectors mounted their covers in their collections.

It was at the UPU Congress of Lisbon (1888) that the decision to distinguish "A.R." covers by striking "A.R." on the front of the envelopes was agreed, but apparently their use was not made mandatory, and many Latin American Republics were very slow in implementing this recommendation, many not doing so until the late 1890's. Some Republics used alternative postal markings to the "AR." advocated by the UPU.



Derek Palmer

Figure 5.

An interesting case (Fig.5) is an envelope front sent San Salvador to Chile in 1892 franked with a 25 centavos stamp, bearing the handstamp "CON AVISO" rather than the expected "A.R.". Lack of specific "A.R." markings can make it difficult for modern collectors to decide whether or not a particular registered cover was sent "A.R." (see my earlier article on franking of Costa Rican registered letters in CANL, 40:213 (1990).

A further important pointer as to whether or not the cover in question did or did not contain "A.R." registered items is that sometimes there is marked lack of expected transit date stamps. Until approximately the World War II period it was standard post office practice to date stamp registered covers each time they were handed on from the jurisdiction of one postal authority or official to another. The idea was that in the event of complaint there would be a close record of the cover's journey from sender to recipient and for this very reason registered letters are important postal history documents in that they confirm what postal route was in use. The vast majority of surviving Central American registered letters from before the First World War were addressed to destinations either in the USA or in Europe. In the days before airmail services most Central American mails intended for European destinations went by sea to New Orleans, from thence via New York by Transatlantic steamer. Most Central American registered letters should show US transit postmarks.

From time to time, however, the accompanying "A.R." form would be so tightly attached to the back of the envelope that the practice of "backstamping" the letter resulted in the postmarks being struck directly onto the form instead of the envelope. Figure 6 is a Guatemalan "A.R." cover, weighing 25g and rated at 6 pesos 52 centavos, sent in 1923 from Zacapa to Denver, Colorado, and serves to highlight three salient points. First this is a comparatively scarce example of a registered cover where the "A.R." form survived still fixed to the back of the envelope, presumably because it was either not delivered or because the US delivery office neglected to obtain the relevant signature. A number of US registration postmarks were struck directly onto the form rather than the envelope and were it not that the form still survives the current collector would have little clue as to this being an "A.R." registered cover since there are no "A. R." postmarks on the envelope.

Secondly the envelope bears no indication on the front that it was in fact an "A.R." letter: in fact it is only when the form is opened out that we see it was to be treated as such. The important point here is that not all Central American Republics abided by the UPU recommendation that "A.R." letters should be struck on the front with the initials "AR". We can only conclude that such Republics felt the presence of the attendant form was always sufficient to alert postal officials that these letters should be treated as "A.R." items.

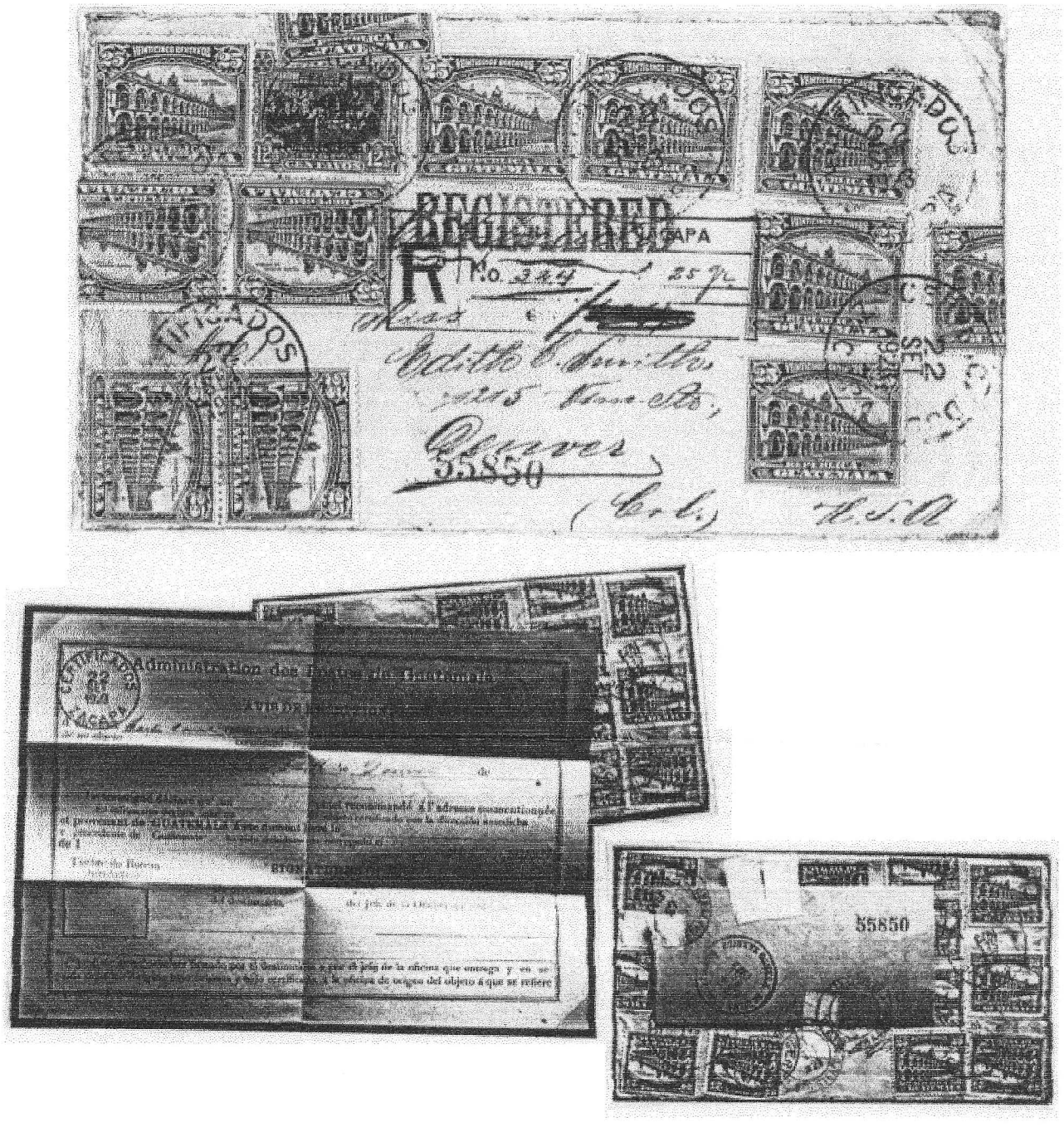


Figure 6

We know that in Guatemala for certain periods it was policy not only to offer free supplementary "A.R." service, but most exceptionally this Republic required all senders of registered letters to send them "A.R.". In other words in Guatemala "A.R." service was an integral part of the normal registry service. At various times, however, Guatemala did resort to using "A. R." postmarks as the letter sent Coban to Germany in 1898 (Fig 7) shows.

Perhaps those of our readers who actively collect Guatemala and who will be better informed of correct postal rates will be able to tell us if there were certain periods when the use of "A.R."

marks was not in fashion and non-specified "A.R." registered covers were the norm rather than the exception.

Figure 7.

Thirdly the 1923 cover, like so many registered letters originating in Latin America, bears many copies of low denomination stamps rather than just a few copies of high denomination stamps. Such covers look extremely attractive to modern collectors, but it must not be assumed this was done for the benefit of philatelists. One obvious explanation for using so many stamps of course is that a given small office might not have high denomination stamps available. The more likely reason, however, was that use of many adhesive postage stamps was deliberate since it was thought that these stamps would make prising open the seals of the envelopes that bit more difficult, and the contents more secure. There are rarely postal regulations in Latin America requiring adhesive postage stamps to be affixed to the top right hand corner on the address side of an envelope, and it is common practice to affix stamps to the reverse sides of envelopes directly over the flaps helping seal them tight.

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GUATEMALA: REGISTRY RATES AND MARKINGS

Part 2 (1900-1945)

by Cécile Gruson

This second part is being written with somewhat more trepidation than the first part, as it is mostly uncharted ground as far as the markings are concerned. Although I went through my entire holding and photocopies, and resorted to tracing the markings that were not reproducable or incomplete, I am conscious that the listing hereafter is far from comprehensive. Please take the article for what it is: just a preliminary try at forming a list of the markings on cover or which can be reconstructed from loose stamps. All and any input on your part to correct and complete this embryonic catalogue would be most welcome. In general, I will not mention colour(s) as, for that period, better than 80% of all postal markings were in violet or purple. The other colours were black, blue and red, in increasing order of scarcity. Thanks are extended to Chris Bettis, Jack Jonza and Mark Spycher for their input.

RATES - a) Registry

1. Peso Currency	Local	Interior & Central America	Pan-American Postal Union	Other UPU countries
1902 (November 6)			75c	75c
1905 (January 1)	30c	30c		
1916 (May 15)			3p	3p
1922 (November 15 & 27)	1p	1p	3p	3p
return receipt	50c		included	included
1923 (September 1) return receipt		1p		
1924 (March 1)	1p	1p	3p	3p
return receipt	50c	1p	included	included
1925 (December 1)	2p	3p	3p	5p
return receipt	50c	3p	3p	3p
2. Quetzal currency	(conversion basis: 60 pesos paper money = 1 Quetzal)			
1929 (October 1)	3c	5c	5c	10c
return receipt	1c	5c	5c	8c
return receipt requested after mailing	2c	10c		16c*

* reduced to 12c in 1942

RATES - b) Declared value

1. Quetzal Currency	Local	Interior & Central America	Pan-American Postal Union	Other UPU countries
1901 (October 1)	3%	3% of value	local and interior only	
1931 (April 15)	1½%	1½% of value	local and interior only	
1931 (September 1), extended to Nicaragua		1½% of value	maximum $100	
1933 (September 1), Nic., El Salvador & Honduras		2% of value	maximum $100	

Declared value fee was in addition to the regular (airmail) postage, postal tax, registry and return receipt.

Markings

Markings will be illustrated in the following order:

Datestamps (oval, round, duplex).
Receipt and inspection dated markings.
Registry boxes.
Miscellaneous handstamps (advice of receipt, delivery).

Where part strikes were sufficient in size (a few were not) and could be related in shape or wording to other markings, the extrapolated parts are drawn as outlines. Dates and places of use are given when known, but your help would be appreciated to complete and refine my indications, which are sometimes based on a single example. When alternate wordings exist for a given type of marking, they are included in the description, even if they do not pertain to the registration service. Illustrations are full size.

I have purposely left out of this listing the registration marks pertaining to official mail (OFICIAL), declared value, and SERVICIO NOCTURNO, which will be treated in separate articles.

OVAL DATESTAMPS

1902-10

1910-20

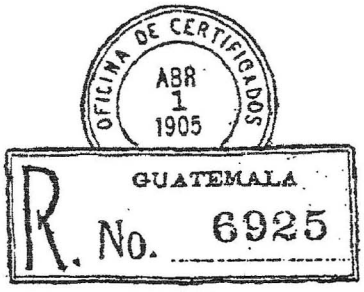
1914

1908-10

1915-20

CIRCULAR DATESTAMPS

Circular datestamps used in **Guatemala City** have a variety of different wordings: it is plausible that those with CENTRAL DE CERTIFICADOS or OFICINA CENTRAL DE CERTIFICADOS were used exclusively at the main post office, whereas the datestamps with OFICINA DE CERTIFICADOS could have been used in any of the branch offices of the capital



1901-08

This type of marking combining datestamp with registry box was never replaced.

1900-09

1907

1912 (Nos. 2 or 3)

1917-19

1919

1920

1922

1925-29 (Nos. 5 or 6)

30 mm: 1924-30 (Nos. 2, 4 or 8)

1927

1927-33

1933

31 mm: 1930-31 (Nos. 7 or 8)

1935-36

1937

30 mm

31 mm: 1935-36

29 mm: 1929-31

1938-50*

1939-41

1945-52

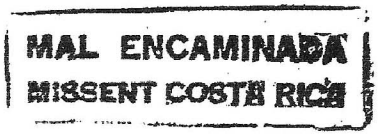
* also with RECEPTOR DE CERTIFICADOS OFICIALES

To be continued

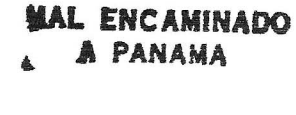
LETTER TO THE EDITOR from DEREK PALMER

"Your recent article 'Missent to Nicaragua' in the July number of CANL (64:39) reminded me of a batch of 'Mal Encaminado' covers that I have accumulated over the years. In case they may be of interest I'm enclosing photocopies of those relating to Central America."

7 January 1948

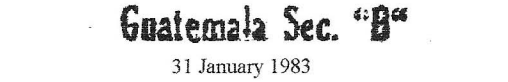


13 November 1981



1 September 1981

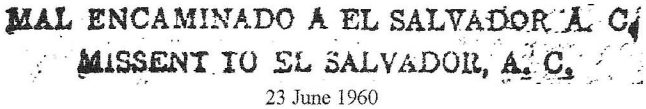
10 October 1975



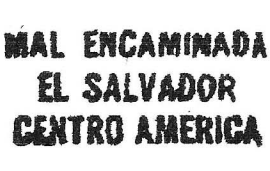
31 January 1983

2 May 1983

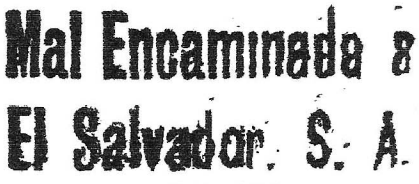
9 May 1978



23 June 1960



18 January 1977



28 May 1984

LETTER TO THE EDITOR from RICHARD WASHBURN

"Illustrated below is a letter from Plaplaya - the only one I have ever seen. It went via Iriona to San Pedro Sula (by air) but who knows how it went from Plapaya to Iriona. Perhaps it was carried on a mule or 'cayuco' (dugout canoe) on the ocean (without a sail)."